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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NDJAMENA 000944

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SUBJECT: CHAD: CONTINUED FIGHTING AND HUMANITARIAN CONCERN

REF: N'DJAMENA 933

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Classified By: CHARGE D'AFFAIRES LUCY TAMLYN FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D)
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¶1. (C) Summary. Intermittent fighting between the Government and rebel groups has spread to the CAR/Sudan/Chad tri-border region. The UN and NGO's have drawn-down expatriate staff from the Farchana and Goz Beida areas, but road travel and humanitarian flights continue. Common banditry (rather than rebel action) is still seen as the greatest threat by the humanitarian community. Minister of Infrastructure Adoum Younousmi is reported to have departed for Khartoum with Chadian National Security head Ismail Chaibo to press the Sudanese for greater cooperation. Looking ahead, the UN Resident Representative cautioned that EUFOR - when and if it deploys - runs the risk of being seen as a belligerent force. End summary.

¶2. (SBU) Intermittent fighting continues in Chad, with new clashes breaking out around Haraz and further north in Tissi (both in the tri-border area). The new protagonists are reported to be two smaller rebel groups: the FPRN (Front Pour Le Renaissance Nationale) headed by Adoum Yacoub Kougou and FSR (Front pour le Salut de la Republique) led by former Ambassador to the United States Soubiane. Infrastructure Minister Adoum Younousmi is reportedly on his way to Khartoum with ANS Chief Ismail Chaibo to press Chad's case with the Government of Sudan.

¶3. (SBU) According to UN security sources, troop concentrations are reported in two other locations, Kapka and Ade. In the Kapka mountains near Biltine the ANT has surrounded the RFC. Both the ANT and the RFC are claiming victory and ANT efforts to dislodge the RFC have been unsuccessful so far. Near Ade, ANT troops may be preparing to retake the small border town of Ade, reportedly taken by the UFDD-Fundamental earlier in the week. The UN has reported that at least forty rebels are in El-Geneina hospital and twenty other critical cases have been flown to Khartoum.

¶4. (SBU) UN aircraft (Air Serv and UNHAS) are currently flying to all camps in eastern Chad, though the decision to do so is made on a daily basis. (Last week flights to Iriba and Guereda were canceled, but resumed on December 4.) WFP is concerned that continued insecurity could severely restrict its ability to deliver food aid to refugee camps and IDP sites. December distribution will happen in all camps, but some will experience reduced rations. Camp Refugee

Committees have been briefed on food distribution protocols in the event international staff are unable to travel to the camps.

15. (SBU) Banditry is still considered to be the major threat for the humanitarian workers. Most roads are considered risky for humanitarian traffic, although travel does occur. Travel decisions are taken on a daily basis. A WFP truck was held up near the much-visited Gaga camp and robbed of five bags of sugar. The Abeche-Farchana road (where the sugar theft occurred) is considered the most dangerous, but is still being used.

16. (SBU) Most NGOs and international organizations have moved to minimal staffing, with staff falling back to Abeche and N'Djamena. Around 130 NGO/IGO staff were evacuated from Farchana and Hadjer Hadid. Goz Beida has also been drastically reduced. Nonetheless, we understand that there is reluctance to move to complete withdrawal as such breaks in programming are difficult to recover from.

17. (C) UN Resident Representative and Humanitarian Coordinator Kingsley Amaning voiced concerns about the situation in the east to CDA during a meeting December 7. He said that he understood that potential European donors to EUFOR were worried that what has been sold as a peacekeeping operation was turning into an active war zone. Amaning explained that the UN needed to consider three scenarios going forward. In the first scenario, EUFOR would not deploy to eastern Chad. In this case the humanitarian community would want to ensure that the rebels' positive perception of their work was maintained and they would continue to be seen as neutral and nonpartisan. Negotiations with rebels to ensure safe passage might be necessary. Under the second scenario, EUFOR would deploy in a situation where the Government of Chad (GOC) and rebel groups had agreed to some

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form of cease fire and negotiation. EUFOR could then be a positive presence to help ensure the peace. In the third (and worst) scenario, EUFOR would be seen as a belligerent force interposing itself between the GOC and rebel factions. In this scenario EUFOR (and the French in particular) would be targets.

18. (C) Amaning himself was pessimistic about the current situation. He said that both the political class as well as most Chadians had lost trust in the current regime and would not stand by it. The President had money, but it was not clear that he would be able to command the loyalty of his troops. Amaning doubted that there was a political role for the UN to play as the GOC was clearly intent on a purely military solution. President Deby, according to Amaning, would prefer to die on the battle field rather than seek any negotiated departure from Chad.

TAMLYN